3 PERSONAL FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT

Program / Services Planning

FFSC program staff are challenged with effectively meeting the needs of all service members, families and commands requesting PFM programs and services. When planning PFM programs and services consider the following:

- What need does the Navy, the command, the service member and his/her family have for PFM programs and services?

- What types of programs/services are needed?

- Are the PFM programs/services cost-effective?

- How can the FFSC work cooperatively with command CFSs to most effectively meet needs?

3.1 ELEMENTS OF PLANNING

A program planning process is essential in developing PFM programs and services. The following elements ensure that programs/services will be planned effectively:

- **Strategic Planning**: The strategic planning process establishes why the FFSC exists, its business and how business is conducted. It clarifies how PFM programs and services interface with FFSC core programs.

- **Needs Assessment**: Needs assessments formally and informally collect information to determine the specific needs of FFSC clients. It determines how these needs are related to personal financial management.

- **Data Analysis**: Analyzing data identifies and prioritizes client needs. It establishes what resources are available to meet these needs.

- **Action Plan Development**: Action plans determine how to most effectively use available resources to meet needs.

- **Program Design**: Using the information gathered from the previous steps, design and implement the most comprehensive programs and services to meet the needs of the greatest number of people.

3.1.1 STRATEGIC PLANNING

Strategic planning is "a disciplined effort to produce fundamental decisions and actions that shape and guide what an organization is, what it does, and why it does it" (Creating and Implementing your Strategic Plan: A Workbook for Public and Nonprofit Organizations, John M. Bryson and Farnum K. Alston, Jossey-Bass, 1995). Strategic planning looks at an organization's mission, goals, objectives, and the internal and external factors impacting it. It allows the organization to respond to a dynamic, changing environment - to act rather than react. FFSC Accreditation Standard 13010 requires that a FFSC Strategic Planning conference be held at least annually.

The key questions asked during the strategic planning process include:

- What is our business? Who are we and why do we exist?

- Who do we serve?

- How should we serve?

- What should our future focus be?

Through the strategic planning process an organization:

- Evaluates information including needs assessment results, data analysis and available resources.

- Prioritizes decisions and actions. Determines what is most important in achieving organizational success.

- Clarifies, plans, and sets goals and objectives for the upcoming year.

- Develops an action plan for day-to-day operations and each staff member's role in the plan.

- Implements the plan.

- Evaluates the plan.

For PFM programs and services the strategic planning process should:

- Clarify the goals and objectives of PFM programs and services.

- Relate the goals and objectives to the FFSC mission.

- Develop an action plan for PFM programs and services including each staff member's responsibilities.

3.1.2 NEEDS ASSESSMENT

A needs assessment is the essential first step in program planning. It is a process of collecting and analyzing data from varied sources in order to make effective decisions. FFSC Accreditation Standard 12010 requires that the needs of all customers be assessed triennially. In addition, SECNAVINST 1754.1A requires a triennial needs assessment using the CNO or Commandant Marine Corps (CMC) standardized research instruments and methods. The needs assessment should determine the unique requirements of eligible personnel residing in a particular FFSC catchment area.

A needs assessment:

- Determines whether the FFSC and PFM programs/services are achieving their mission.

- Develops a demographic profile of the client population and its needs; including knowledge of and the desire to use services, as well as barriers to using services.

- Analyzes service delivery trends.

- Identifies gaps in services.

A needs assessment for PFM programs and services gathers information from command leadership, command financial specialists, service members and their families to determine:

- Specific PFM-related needs.

- The programs and services currently available to meet these needs.

- Satisfaction with current PFM programs and services.

- PFM needs not yet met.

- Preferred days, times and locations for programs and services.

3.1.2.1 Data Collection

Information regarding the PFM (and other FFSC) needs of service members and their families comes from a variety of sources. Navy-wide surveys, Base or FFSC surveys, FFSC program evaluations, and focus groups elicit information fundamental to program planning.

There are four methods used most often in data collection. These are:

- Review of pre-existing data: Examine past needs assessments (FFSC, Installation, and community), computerized data collection system reports, and program evaluations. For example, use information from intake to identify PFM needs that could be addressed by programs or information fact sheets.

- Surveys

- Focus groups

- Interviews

Surveys, focus groups, and interviews are discussed in the following three sections. (See Section 6.1.3 for further information on program evaluations.)

3.1.2.1.1 Surveys

Survey research is one of the most effective methods available to acquire information from a relatively large group of individuals. A questionnaire format is used to present questions and record responses. The information obtained helps specifically identify needed programs and services, and by whom they are most needed.

The advantages of survey research include:

- It is an effective method to quantify large amount of data.

- It is time-efficient for use with large numbers of participants.

- It allows participants to contribute to the development of the programs/services they may eventually use.

The disadvantages include:

- It can be expensive to administer.

- The questions may miss the true issues.

- It is time-consuming to analyze.

- Although a random selection of the target population is used, the response rate may be low (from 20 to 50% on average) or skewed by one or more variables.

Survey questions may be either open-ended or close-ended. Open-ended questions leave room for the survey-taker to answer with complete thoughts and ideas. Close-ended questions allow the survey-taker to answer with a choice of only one from a list of pre-determined responses.

Open-ended questions are:

- More difficult to quantify and fully interpret answers.

- Useful to identify general needs.

Close-ended questions are:

- Useful when trying to focus needs.

- Easier to quantify.

3.1.2.1.1.1 NAVY LEADERSHIP SURVEY 2000

DoD Instruction 1342.22 Fleet and Family Support Centers, mandates periodic service-wide needs assessments. In 1994 and 1996, the Navy surveyed Active Duty personnel and spouses regarding quality of life (QOL) and FFSC services. In 2000, assessments of Navy leadership were conducted at 60 sites. The purpose of the 2000 survey was to identify leaders' perceptions of the benefits and impact of FFSC programs and services, and to identify service member and family issues faced by Navy leaders.

The following highlights the findings of the 2000 survey that are relevant to the planning and implementation of PFM programs and services. (Survey results specific to PFM marketing are discussed in Section 5.2.1.1.)

- Financial concerns were the number one issue dealt with by Navy leadership.

- Financial concerns were among the top five issues that Navy leaders need help in solving.

- Financial concerns were among the top five issues addressed by Navy chaplains.

- Overall, Navy leadership was <u>fairly</u> familiar with PFM programs and services offered by FFSCs.

- Leadership is <u>most</u> likely to refer financial concerns to the FFSC.

- Financial "assistance" was among the top five FFSC programs used by service members.

- On a scale of one (not beneficial) to seven (very beneficial) 4.87 was the average rating leadership gave the FFSC for solving financial problems.

In addition to Navy-wide surveys, an installation or the FFSC may also conduct surveys. These surveys yield data on local client demographics, service demand, use of resources, and geographic/economic factors. A local survey should be conducted if:

- There is no local database, i.e. necessary information has never been compiled.

- There have been significant changes in the size or characteristics of the base/installation.

- Available data is more than two years old.

3.1.2.1.2 FOCUS GROUPS

A focus group is an organized, small group discussion. It is "focused" in two ways – the participants have a common interest or are similar in some way, and the purpose of the group is to gather information about a specific topic. It is the most widely used form of qualitative research.

The intent of a focus group is to develop a broad and deep understanding of a topic. The focus group seeks in-depth, open-ended responses on a topic. It does not build consensus,

but explores the diversity of opinions within the group. The desired outcome of the focus group interview is a clarification of needs/issues and clear marketing goals. (See Section 5.2.1) The focus group is an efficient means of quickly collecting relevant data and several perspectives on the same topic.

A focus group:

- Interviews groups of 6 to 10 people in an informal group setting.

- Typically lasts approximately one to two hours.

- Should be composed of people who are comfortable with each other.

- Asks predetermined questions. There should be six to eight questions that ask "how" or "what" and are sequenced from general or broad, to narrow or specific. The questions are focused on the type of information to be gathered.

- Is not necessarily representative due to the small size of the group. Two to three focus groups should be conducted on the same topic to increase the reliability and validity of information.

During the focus group discussion:

- Introduce all participants. Thank them for coming and clearly state the reason for the meeting.

- Set ground rules. These include, but are not limited to: speak one at a time, be sure others can hear, no one need answer every question, voice your own opinion - don't be swayed by the group.

- Start by asking something positive and non-threatening such as, "What do you like about the services we provide?"

- Ask for suggestions on improving programs/services.

Tips for the focus group moderator:

- Use open-ended questions to facilitate group interaction and stimulate thinking.

- Have an additional staff member present to record what is said and who said it (group may be taped).

- Do not debate. Listen and gather information.

- Facilitate interaction within the group: Get the group members talking to each other – not to or through the moderator.

- Keep the session focused.

- Ensure that everyone participates and no one person dominates.

Consider the following in organizing a focus group for PFM programs/services:

- The groups should be representative. Try to include not only those who are enthusiastic supporters of PFM programs and services, but also those who have been less than satisfied.

- Command leadership, particularly command master chiefs, other senior enlisted, and ombudsmen can provide useful and accurate information.

- A focus group composed of command financial specialists can be utilized when seeking information related to the training and requirements of CFSs.

- Remember: A focus group may identify what the participants want rather than what they need.

3.1.2.1.3 INTERVIEWS

Interviews are used to gather information on an individual basis. Relatively inexpensive, interviews may be conducted face-to-face or by telephone. Interviews should be structured so that issues can be fully explored and detailed responses can be obtained. The advantages of interviews are that one can establish rapport with the respondent (especially when face-to-face) and that complex questions can be asked.

When preparing for and conducting interviews:

- Predetermine the focus. What information needs to be acquired?

- Develop a standard set of questions. Questions should be relevant, easy to answer (not requiring the respondent to look up information) and not embarrassing for the respondent.

- Choose a setting with little distraction.

- Address terms of confidentiality. Will the respondent be identified by name or position? How will the information be used?

- Explain the format and proposed length of the interview.

- Ask for permission to record or take notes. Don't rely on memory.

3.1.3 DATA ANALYSIS

Once information has been obtained on client demographics, service demand and available resources, the data must be carefully analyzed. It is critical that the data is organized in a clear and succinct manner.

Data analysis:

- Summarizes and describes the collected data so it can be effectively used. Essential patterns and trends should be identified.

- Includes a statistical review and an intuitive approach, i.e. the statistical data is combined with information from other sources. Frequency of response, as well as the mean or average rating, are commonly used statistics.

- Develops a profile of the client population (demographics) and its needs.

- Examines service delivery trends and client feedback. Are the programs and services useful or obsolete? Are the participants satisfied? Is the mission of the program being achieved?

- Identifies gaps in service. Should resources be reallocated?

- Provides the statistical and evaluative data necessary to procure funding.

3.2 Resource Identification and Analysis

The FFSC has limited financial, staff and material resources. Program planning must take into consideration the availability and organization of resources. Do the resources exist to implement the programs and services being planned? How can resources be obtained? Look not only within the FFSC and the Navy community but also to the broader, local community.

Identify the FFSC staff that have the skills to provide PFM programs and services, i.e. clinical counselors and program staff. Others, including administrative staff, may be qualified and interested. Volunteers are also a valuable resource for PFM programs and services.

Assess fiscal and material resources. What is needed to support PFM programs and services? Staff should be aware of budget and fiscal constraints. Money for training materials, marketing materials, printing and travel must be budgeted.

3.3 Navy-Specific Factors in Planning PFM Programs/Services

The Navy lifestyle has numerous characteristics that must be considered in planning PFM programs and services. These characteristics include: deployments, pay fluctuations (i.e., sea pay), mission, geographic separation, and frequent moves. Although all of these are facts of life for Navy families, they have a direct impact on financial issues, stress and the ability to cope. These factors must be addressed when planning program content, design and logistics.

3.3.1 Diversity of the Fleet

The client population who utilize PFM programs and services must be considered in planning. The needs of all of the Navy's population should be incorporated into programs and services. This population is diverse and their needs are usually different from those of the general, civilian population.

Programs must be inclusive to male and female, singles and married, single parents, blended families, etc. Addressing those who may need specialized support ensures that service members are able to pursue a Navy career at levels of performance and readiness consistent with the Navy's mission. Use surveys, focus groups and other means of data collection to determine the special needs of these populations.

3.3.2 AREA SPECIFIC FACTORS

The characteristics of the local area are another consideration in planning PFM programs and services. Consider:

- Economic factors such as cost of living, employment opportunities and the availability of affordable housing.

- Demographic factors including, but not limited to: size of the Navy population, transience, age, length in service, and marital status. These factors determine how well families may cope with personal financial concerns, and how supportive and understanding the community may be of service members and their families.

- Mission of the installation/command: For example, whether an installation is a training site or a deploying community has an impact on the financial situation of service members and their families.

- Community resources and the cost of these resources.

3.3.2.1 OCONUS FACTORS

The stress, uncertainty and financial realities involved in adjusting to a foreign culture usually means that the need for PFM programs and services is high at OCONUS sites. When planning programs and services at an OCONUS site, consider the following:

- The financial difficulties of living overseas are numerous. Often, the cost of living is extremely high. Additional expenses include the cost of buying items that could not be shipped, have different electrical requirements, etc.

- Combined with a high cost of living, there may be a reduction in income and additional expenses. There may not be a job available for the service member's spouse. Housing, car insurance, etc. may cost more. The family may now need to pay for day care that was previously provided by a family member.

- Although the Navy recognizes the differences in cost of living and provides additional allowances, these do not always cover the difference in costs. In addition, the exchange rate fluctuates. Extra allowances may not keep up with the changes in the exchange rate.

Furthermore, there are often limited community resources available. There may not be a civilian support system in place, the services may not be available in English, or service members and their families may be unable to access the services.

3.3.3 COMMAND SPECIFIC FACTORS

PFM programs can be generically planned and then customized or tailored to a command's specific needs. Command specific factors to be considered include:

- How active is the current CFS? What types of programs is he/she providing?

- Demographics of the service members including age, marital status, rank and rate, and level of security clearance of the specific command.

- Letters of indebtedness and processing of them.

- Financial problems in the command including CO's non-judicial punishment for these problems.

- Service members needing NMCRS assistance.